

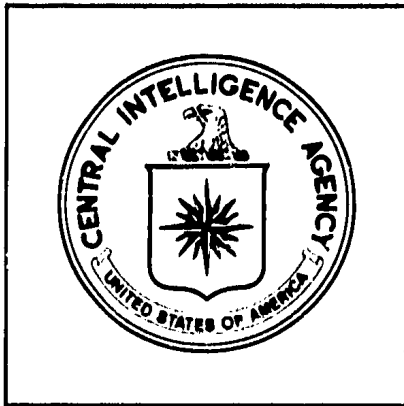
CIAOSR MD 1933/75  
Military Developments

19 Nov 75

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OSR 1933/75

**Secret**

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## STAFF NOTES:

# Military Developments

**Secret**

OSR 1933/75  
November 19, 1975  
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The Portuguese Army is in the process of releasing about 17,000 officers and men. The move is designed to purge from the army's ranks a large number of radical leftists and to restore some of the unity and discipline which have been lost in the last 18 months. The army's exact personnel strength is unclear even to Portuguese staff officers, [REDACTED] it will fall to 41,000 by the time this action is completed in December--a decrease of about 173,000 since April 1974, when the Armed Forces Movement took power.

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Officially, military leaders maintain that this reduction, like earlier ones, reflects the country's declining need for the sizable military establishment developed at the height of Portugal's colonial involvement. [REDACTED]

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Of the 214,000 men on duty in April 1974, 59,000 were in Portugal, primarily to train troops for service in African and Asian colonies. As the country shed its dependencies, the forces abroad decreased rapidly. Most units returning from the colonies were disbanded and the personnel discharged. During this time, however, the strength of the training establishment in continental Portugal remained almost constant in size. With the army's colonial responsibility at an end and no alternative mission defined, the officers and men had few military duties and plenty of time for political discussion and activity, which may have contributed to the alarming lack of military discipline observed this year.

Some 10,000 men were given early discharges on October 31, and current plans call for an additional 7,000 to be released in December, bringing the army to the estimated level of about 41,000. Before the October action, army

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officials evidenced deep concern that leftist soldiers might resist release, barricade themselves in their units, and refuse to leave. Given Portugal's serious unemployment problem, officials feared that others might also resist return to an uncertain civilian life. The first stage of the discharge program, however, apparently took place almost without incident.

In 1976, the army expects to begin inducting new conscripts to build back up to an overall permanent strength of 53,000. It is hoped that the use of careful selection procedures will result, over time, in a better, more disciplined conscript army.

Success in this effort will be an important test of the ability of the current government and army leadership to gain control of the disordered military. But the building of an army which can be depended upon to contribute to public order is likely to take more than new personnel. For one thing, the leadership will have to define a new, realistic mission and then sell it to the troops. Ultimately, there will probably have to be a resolution of the underlying political conflict in Portugal which will give clear dominance to one side or the other. A conscript army inevitably reflects the society from which it comes, and the most careful selection procedures will not eliminate differing views in the military if these reflect fundamental divisions in the population which provides its members.

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